

Shortgrass Country  
By Monte Noelke  
7-16-70  
Page 3

To keep from jeopardizing the rights of the guilty parties involved (and I never have seen any sense in protecting the innocent ones), I have to tell you this story without using names or supporting evidence.

Back in June, a rancher forwarded me a letter that had come to his attention. It rejected an offer by a bunch of snake hunters to give the state's largest agriculture college some live rattlesnakes and fresh venom. The circumstances were that a service club was holding a big hunt and thought the college's department of wildlife might like a few specimens to use in research work. If there is such a thing as a pack of country boys having good intentions, this was an instance.

Well, one of the professors not only rejected their offer, but went on to write them that such activities were usually "hedonic displays of wanton killing and plebeian sadism." The tone of the professor's reply sounded exactly like he'd just poked his sore thumb in a Bunsen burner, or perhaps stabbed his hand with a scalpel.

Right away I saw that I couldn't get mixed up in the fracas. The papered scholar, you could tell, was going to win the verbal battle by two lengths and one "plebeian sadism" to boot. It was equally plain the snake grabbers were going to be so distracted, studying the enormous word list in the dictionary that they couldn't stay in post card range of the enemy.

Also, neither party offered any inducement for an outsider to take a side.

You don't have to be told how crazy it'd be to ally yourself with a snake lover. The best Mexican cowboy to ever come to this ranch had to be sent back to Mexico for a vacation one time, just because he got to believing he could hear rattlesnakes talking in the pasture. I don't know how far you'd have to send a chap who wanted to defend rattlesnakes. It'd be doubtful if a trip clear to the Isthmus of Panama would heal the damage. The Arctic zone might be too close.

Throwing in with the ranchers or the snake handlers wouldn't be a good deal, either. Unless snake handling pays off better than ranching, the two put together couldn't finance a mock attack against the Shetland Pony Assn., much less bank a campaign against a state supported college.

Look where the smart money always goes: you never see a successful horse player working the receiving alley of the glue factories for a running prospect. If you don't believe this, when you get to Eternity, ask all the heroic captains who sunk with their ships how they plan to weather out their next wreck. They can tell you how smart it is to drive on the low tide.

The 1970s aren't the time to challenge killing a rattlesnake or stepping on a tumblebug. Every varmint from caterpillars to wolves can feast off the ranchers under the guise of solving the environmental crisis.

Those snake chousers and obliging ranchers had better lie low. It wasn't too many years ago, you know, that the eagles had to work for their lamb chops.